

ON
PAROLEMrs. Axman, Probation
Officer, Tells of the Sud-
den Temptations Before
Which Her Visitors Fell.

In the big building of the Educational Alliance in East Broadway, upstairs in a cozy room filled with bric-a-brac, with bookcases and comfortable chairs, with windows through which you can see an outlook at night of dense shadows and high lights, black house-tops and the neck-

environment. And yet she was absolutely guileless of any real wrongdoing. "When I saw her off on the steamer her uncle came to me and begged me to accept a little token of their regard. I promptly refused, but I tell this to lead up to the fact that many of these poor people whom I

of development. She, too, had stolen a doll and two handkerchiefs. All she could say to me was: "Oh, I was sorely tempted, I was sorely tempted." "I had her put on parole, not because I thought there was any danger of her repeating the offence, but so that I could keep her in view."

"Two other girls, sisters, who will come

the lady who comes. She draws a slip of paper out of it, and while she is drawing it I pray the good God to direct her hand. It is all for the poor children, darling."

"She ignores with the innocence of perfect ignorance the real reason of her conviction, but goes away promising to make her report the next week, and exclaiming again that the nine children must be taken care of, law or no law."

through the influence of another woman. At last they are both together again; he has worked out his sentence and she is on parole. I don't believe in him, but I do in her, and I am keeping my eye on both.

"The attitude of the people toward me? It varies. Some of them are so grateful. Even after the parole and the probation terms are over, they still come for advice, sympathy, because they like me and know

week of reporting on his own responsibility that all is well. As the visitors enter, the dozen boys are describing with eloquent words and gestures their experiences at various Bowery theatres. The one who is holding the floor is saying: "I seen a scene."

"In what?" asks the probation officer, kindly, interested immediately in whatever interests her boys, as she calls all the young sinners in her flock.

"Tracked Around the World," is the answer, and one after the other offers a word of description, to all of which eager attention is accorded.

Mrs. Axman's alert eyes note that one boy is avoiding her gaze; that another is looking better physically and morally; that still another is waiting for that moment of confidence when, with their backs toward the others in the room, a few low spoken words, a few tears, perhaps, will meet with needed sympathy and advice.

Mrs. Axman returns from one of these

Library. When he came up in the Children's Court the judge asked him what books he stole.

"Two volumes of Shakespeare," he said.

"Why did you take those?"

"Because," he said very softly, "I am very fond of reading Shakespeare."

"The boy with him had taken some books on geometry. They were released, on parole and he comes each week and borrows a book, sits and reads it, and takes it home with him afterward—good books, too, the best my little library here affords."

There is a small and homeless boy wandering about whose history adds another link to the chain of interest. He has come from Galicia, running away from a cruel stepmother. By some chance here and there, playing stowaway, eluding vigilance where he could, he finally reached New York and for four days wandered about the streets until he was found and sent to the Gerry society.



ON PROBATION FOR HIS FIRST OFFENCE.

place of the Williamsburg Bridge, a queer procession of visitors call on Mrs. Axman. She is a probation officer of the city and has charge of parole and probation cases of the Children's Court. The visitors are persons who have been tempted and have fallen, perhaps just once.

"The holiday trade is an enormous temptation to the women," she said to a SUN reporter, who got her to talk about her experiences. "Where I have perhaps ten cases to look after in November and January, during the holiday rush I have a couple of hundred. A majority of these cases are absolutely first offences, and in a great many cases, the greater part I should say, the offence is absolutely unprompted."

"The poor creatures are sent perhaps on an errand, go into a store and yield to the most incompressible temptations. I have known of cases in which a girl was trusted with money by her mistress, perhaps did the shopping for the household or worked in an establishment where costly materials were displayed before her and was absolutely honest, yet she went to a store during the holiday attractions and stole something she didn't want. Such a girl wonders why she took what she stole when she comes to herself."

"One of the cases in point is that of a young Irish girl who had a record for unimpeachable honesty for a couple of years. She was sent down town to buy something and seized with this unexplainable desire took some twenty-five cent tanning and a little doll, for neither of which she had any use."

"She was caught and arrested. When I was sent for to talk to her after her appearance in court all she could do was to look herself back and forth and say, 'Oh, I don't know why I did it! I want to go back to Ireland! I want to go back to Ireland!'"

"After a long time I got her to admit that she had a friend, a Mr. Brady, and he could help her prove her honesty. It afterward came out that the Mr. Brady in question was her brother, and she did not like to say so, because she was ashamed for him to have such a sister."

"After I got her released I could not shake her determination to go back to Ireland, and back she went. She simply could not get over the fact that she had done something whose remembrance would never be dispelled, and she wanted to go away from it to her old friends and her old

help try to recompense me in some way—gifts, anything, everything, not so much from gratitude as from the more pathetic

reason that they are so used to paying for everything that is done for them that they do not seem to realize that they can be helped and rescued from unfortunate and humiliating conditions for nothing. It is a sad truth which needs special attention."

"Another girl arrested this holiday season for stealing was a poor little half-Mexican resident of the East Side who was 21 in years but with a mind childlike in its lack

of development. She, too, had stolen a doll and two handkerchiefs. All she could say to me was: "Oh, I was sorely tempted, I was sorely tempted."

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DESCENDING THE BOWERY SHOW.

in this evening to report have a record each of them for perfect honesty in different places where they have worked, but they took positions in a store while the holiday rush was on, and that was their undoing. They could not explain to me why they stole. All they seemed to feel was that they could not resist the temptation to have some of the pretty things by which they were surrounded.

"I have these paroled prisoners come here to me because I can have a better chance to talk to them undisturbed, and it is less humiliating to them. I make visits, too. Last month I made nearly three hundred, but I find that my best results are achieved right here."

"Most of the cases are petty larceny cases. I have had in the course of two years only one case of inebriety and the usual cases of immoral conduct, which I find when investigated are really immoral rather than immoral."

"What do I mean by that? Simply that the young women are absolutely without moral stamina and cannot realize that they are doing anything for which they should be punished. I can do nothing for them except help them to get into an environment where they are kept straight in spite of themselves, for many of them are merely blown by whichever wind finds them and do not seek either the right path or the wrong one of their own volition."

While Mrs. Axman was talking there were frequent knocks at the door, preceding many visitors—men who escorted paroled wives, the two sisters mentioned and others.

"But I don't see, darling," said one smooth-tongued visitor, "how I'm hurting anybody. I've got the nine children, and they must be taken care of."

Her offence is the practice of medicine secretly without license under cover of fortune telling. She explains her method of fortune telling, which might furnish ideas for the army of palmists further uptown.

"I just take a wooden box and hand it to

help try to recompense me in some way—gifts, anything, everything, not so much from gratitude as from the more pathetic

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"Others again never want to see me, and when we meet on the street they avoid me. To them I am a reminder of a terrible experience which they want to forget. I don't blame them a bit."

"On the other hand, these people who have been on parole or probation are often a great assistance to me. They often send for me or write me when anything is going wrong with any member of their families. If a young girl gets into bad habits of staying out at night with dissolute companions, is indifferent in her work, receives attention from some young man whose reputation is not of the best, I am asked to step in and try to save her from any further mistakes."

"My responsibility? It is a great one. The judges nearly always refer all these cases for my investigation, and my word as to whether the prisoner shall be sentenced or freed on parole and probation is final."

"You have to live right here, see these people every day and study all the underlying temptations, their philosophies of life, their pasts, presents and futures to understand them and to deal justly. I often think if the same methods were pursued in the criminal courts that are followed in the Children's Court it would be well, since

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The reference to the Children's Court, which is the probation officer that it is time for her to go downstairs and receive the boy probationers, who also come this evening to make their weekly reports. One of the boys paroled over a year ago is waiting outside the door of the officer's apartment and escorts the party to the other room. Mrs. Axman speaks of him affectionately as her "strawberry," for since his parole was over he has not missed a

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REPORTING TO THE PROBATION OFFICER.

confidential moments with a frown of perplexity.

"It is so hard," she exclaims. "That poor boy is the oldest of a large family, he wants to go to work to help his widowed mother, and he is not old enough to get his working papers. The working papers can only be given to a boy of 14, and he is only 13, but large and strong for his age."

"I can do nothing, and I feel that he should be allowed to do as he wants to. That is one of the hardest refusals to give and it is one of frequent occurrence. It is very hard on many families."

One boy says his good-night in a peculiarly allusive way. His words, well articulated and in the manner courteous and refined. He hesitates at the question as to whether there is anything he wants, and holds up a volume he is reading.

"I am very much interested in this," he says, "if I could take it?"

It is lent to him immediately, and after he leaves his presence is explained.

"On parole, he was arrested with another boy for stealing books from the Public

Now he is under the chaperonage of the probation officer awaiting the next move on the chessboard of his fate, which Mrs. Axman hopes will be the offer of a good home.

Here are some things about the East Side, learned on the visit to the Educational Alliance Building.

"It is useless to try to give these people over on the East Side anything but the best when it comes to a question of entertainment," said one instructor. "They know good art even though they are shabby and squalid. When we give them music they can tell in a moment if it falls below a high standard. It is the same with dramatic work, entertainments of every kind. They are artists, all of them, by temperament and through inheritance."

Another instructor asked:

"Why is it that every other man and boy down this way is called a 'boy'?"

"A name sure enough and has stood the test of time, but you would think, even in this quarter of the city, they could find a few others."

"Just for fun on my way down I hallooed a small boy who was ahead of me. 'Hello, Abe!' I called out. Sure enough, he turned and said, 'Hello!' in a matter of fact way that showed me I was right."

His story was met by another by Mrs. Axman.

"Up in the Children's Court the other day Judge Deane asked a small boy who was up for examination, 'Do you know so and so?' mentioning a boy by name. The answer was 'No,' and the same 'No' was repeated as the judge read the list of boys' names to him. Finally he said:

"Do you know any boy by the name of Ike?"

"The boy looked up at him, full in the face, and said 'I don't know any boy by the name of Ike.'"

The judge said: "Convicted. A boy who lives over on the East Side and don't know any one by the name of Ike is under suspicion right."

Papers in every language are in the reading room. This story was told of it by an official of the Alliance.

"I heard an amusing conversation the other day. Two men discussed an event of some importance to them."

"It was in all the papers this morning," said one, surprised that the other had not read about it.

"What papers?" inquired the other.

"The English papers."

"But who reads the English papers?" enquired the second man.

"That is quite true, too. We have the papers printed in English, but have little call for them. Yiddish, German, Russian and even the languages of the Poles, the Saxon are in constant demand, and that gives one an impression of the cosmopolitan character of the work."

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